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SUBJECT: BALI: CONTINUED PRESSURE CAUSES AHMADIYAH MEMBERS TO SEEK
POLITICAL ASYLUM

REF: A. A 07 SURABAYA 42

[1](#)B. REF: B JAKARTA 888

This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect
accordingly.

[1](#)1. (U) Six representatives of the Islamic religious sect
Ahmadiyah now resident in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara (NTB)
sought but failed to gain political asylum at the Australian
Consulate and German Honorary Consulate in Bali on May 15. The
six claimed to represent 195 Ahmadiyah members still in Lombok.
Members of this Islamic sect admitted plans to seek help at
other, unspecified foreign consulates in Bali. Increased
pressure from national religious leaders and local officials has
forced the group to act, according media reports and a Congen
Surabaya contact.

Political Asylum -- A Preliminary Strategy

[1](#)2. (SBU) An Ahmadiyah representative told Bali TV media that,
"We are looking for asylum because we do not feel secure in our
hometown." Mr. Adhar Hakim, television journalist and director
of the Indonesian legal rights NGO, SOMASI told Congen Surabaya
that Ahmadiyah representatives had advised him they would seek
asylum at Australian and German Consulates in Denpasar before
they departed for Bali. Mr. Hakim said that they did not have
any plans to go to the U.S. Consulate, but might do so in the
future. Seeking political asylum is only a temporary solution
for Ahmadiyah members according to Hakim and they are waiting
for guidance on next steps from Ahmadiyah's Central Board in
Jakarta.

Rising National and Local Pressure

[1](#)3. (SBU) Anti-Ahmadiyah opinion has mounted recently as the
semi-official religious advisory body, the Majelis Ulama Islam
(MUI) has upped the ante by proposing an outright ban. (Reftel
B) Protests against Ahmadiyah in Lombok have escalated over the
past year. Dozens claiming to represent Islamic student and
youth groups have tried unsuccessfully to breach the police
cordon protecting the Ahmadiyah refugee complex located in the
Transito dormitory in Mataram. According to Hakim, active local
opposition toward NTB's Ahmadiyah community first came from a
revered local religious figure Tuan Guru. Hakim speculated that
Tuan Guru is threatened by the egalitarian culture of the sect
which undercuts his respected status as a powerbroker in the
community. The sect's survival and growth in some places has
made them seem more like a credible challenge to the religious

status quo than a cult on the ropes (Reftel A).

¶4. (U) Many, like former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid, are calling for tolerance. Wahid stands ready to file an amicus brief in support of Ahmadiyah if the sect is banned outright, according to media. On April 24, twenty-eight youth and religious organizations in East Java protested the central government's proposed banning of the sect arguing that the government lacks legal standing to do so.

Forced to Make Ends Meet

¶5. (SBU) While MUI turns up the heat on Ahmadiyah nationally, Hakim told us that the Mataram city government limits on food rations for the sect have caused members to leave the refugee camp and look for work far afield. Now earning their keep outside the camp, Ahmadiyah members are more visible, and thus more vulnerable to violence from hard-line groups. Hakim told us he canvassed villagers in Ketapang (former NTB home to Ahmadiyah) about a potential return of the group. Some villagers welcomed them back as long as they remained "low profile" were no longer "insular", and refrained from openly conducting daily religious practices. There are no signs that the group will return to their original homes and negative national attention continues to complicate any compromise.

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